

Ordinary People part #4 Esther – Woman of Intercession

Esther – We treasure security! Real security must be found beyond this life!

- **Only when our security rests on God and His unchanging nature can we face the challenges that life is sure to bring our way.**
- **When you face challenges in life, seek to know what God wants you to do, then do it, confident he will do his part.**
- **Trust God and prepare to be surprised by the ways he demonstrates his trustworthiness.**
- **Esther’s risk confirmed that God was the source of her security.**

Esther 4:8-16 - ⁸ He also gave him a copy of the text of the edict for their annihilation, which had been published in Susa, to show to Esther and explain it to her, and he told him to instruct her to go into the king’s presence to beg for mercy and plead with him for her people.

⁹ Hathak went back and reported to Esther what Mordecai had said. ¹⁰ Then she instructed him to say to Mordecai, ¹¹ “All the king’s officials and the people of the royal provinces know that for any man or woman who approaches the king in the inner court without being summoned the king has but one law: that they be put to death unless the king extends the gold scepter to them and spares their lives. But thirty days have passed since I was called to go to the king.”

¹² When Esther’s words were reported to Mordecai, ¹³ he sent back this answer: “Do not think that because you are in the king’s house you alone of all the Jews will escape. ¹⁴ ***For if you remain silent at this time, relief and deliverance for the Jews will arise from another place, but you and your father’s family will perish. And who knows but that you have come to your royal position for such a time as this?***”

¹⁵ Then Esther sent this reply to Mordecai: ¹⁶ “Go, gather together all the Jews who are in Susa, and fast for me. Do not eat or drink for three days, night or day. I and my attendants will fast as you do. When this is done, I will go to the king, even though it is against the law. And if I perish, I perish.”

In every age, **God needs intercessors to feel the need of the lost and cry out to Him on their behalf. Esther, after being inspired by Mordecai, **fulfilled this role in her day.****

Definition of intercessor – A person who intervenes on behalf of another, especially by prayer.

I. GOD MAKES A WAY

The Book of Esther begins by revealing the unusual path that a young Jewish woman took to become queen of a Gentile nation.

In the 3rd chapter, the reader learns of **the abrupt promotion of Haman the Agagite**, an action that almost looks like it was forced into the narrative.

- Ahasuerus, king of Persia placed Haman over all the princes in the land.
- **No reason is given for his promotion**; nothing in the story indicated *the rationale for his advancement*, but perhaps **royalty is not obliged** to have reasons.

In any event, **Haman became the Prime Minister** to Ahasuerus.

- **One of the perks** that came with his new position was **the homage people were required to pay** to Haman.
- **The king commanded** everyone to ***bow before and give reverence to Haman*** (Esther 3:2).
- **Haman deeply enjoyed** the honors given to him.

The problem arose when Mordecai refused to bow before Haman.

The king's servants, who suspected how this would be received by Haman, **tried to convince Mordecai to bow**, but he steadfastly refused.

- **He was a Jew and would bow only to God!**
- There are times when the only course for pragmatism is to kneel before principle.
- When a person refuses to violate his principles—that is, he does the right thing, he will suffer the consequences of his action.
- The servants, curious to see whether this impudence would be tolerated, informed Haman of Mordecai's refusal.
- **Haman became enraged.**
- He took it as a personal affront and determined to execute Mordecai.
- The servants had also informed him that Mordecai was a Jew.
- Haman, overcome with ***rage and wounded pride***, decided to **kill not only Mordecai**, but also all of his people, **the Jews in Persia**.
- Haman approached King Ahasuerus **with his plan**.

The king approved of Haman's plan!

- Haman was excused from paying ten-thousand talents of silver to the treasury.
- The king gave Haman his signet ring and summoned the scribes on the thirteenth day of the first month to write a decree to be distributed throughout the empire.
- All the Jews were to be killed on the thirteenth day of the twelfth month.
- A decree sealed with the king's ring could not be revoked.
- Haman's action cast a long shadow over the Jewish people.
- Those were dark days for the Jews.

Oil and water do not mix well. It makes little difference how long you commingle them in a beaker. Not long after you stop, they will separate with the oil rising to the top and the water settling to the bottom.

The devil and the church do not mix well either.

- If they ever do, it is to the detriment of the church.
- If the church maintains its identity, it will resist any overtures from Satan.

The hostility between the Church and Satan is more than passive dislike for each other.

- **The devil** has been relentless in his quest to destroy the bride of Christ, the Church.
- He is not resting today.
- **As we approach the return of Christ**, Satan has stepped up his attack on the church.
- He leaves no stone unturned, no plan untried, and no saint untouched in his **crusade against the church**.
- He slips falsehood into truth until it's **difficult to discern** between the two.
- **He tries** to intimidate Christians by unleashing persecution in their direction.
- **He pushes the pursuit of prosperity** to the Western church, hoping to lull them to sleep.
- **Satan** is doing everything in his power to extinguish the Light of the world.
- He has made this a dark day in which to live.

Satan loves to work under a cover of darkness.

- He must think that God cannot see in the dark.
- But, since before time God has delighted to work in the dark.
- **The fourth watch of the night, the watch just before dawn when the night is darkest is God's specialty.**
- **It was during the fourth watch of the night that Jesus walked on troubled water to comfort his frightened disciples.**

God at work in the darkness is the pattern of creation.

Genesis 1:1-3 - The Beginning - 1 In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. 2 Now the earth was formless and empty, darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters.

3 And God said, ***"Let there be light," and there was light.***

II. GOD USES PEOPLE - *God's method of operation has always been to use people to accomplish His will.*

Nowhere is this more clearly illustrated than in the conversion story of Saul.

- **God Himself** stopped Saul on the road to Damascus.
- **Saul heard the audible voice of God** address him in the Hebrew language.
- He was left **physically blind** by this encounter with God,
- **When God sought to restore Saul's eyesight and open his spiritual eyesight,**
- **He worked through a man—Ananias.**
- **God instructed Saul, Acts 9:6** - So he, trembling and astonished, said, "Lord, what do You want me to do?" Then the Lord said to him, ***"Arise and go into the city, and you will be told what you must do."***

God used Ananias to restore Saul's sight and to reveal the plan of salvation to Paul to baptize him in the name of Jesus Christ, and to pray for Saul as he received the Holy Ghost.

Mordecai possessed a deep faith for the Jewish people.

- ***He understood them to be God's people and was confident that God would deliver them from their present peril.***

In his challenge to Esther, he reminded her that the Jews would be delivered, whether or not She chose to become the source of deliverance.

Mordecai also understood that *there is a tension between the sovereignty of God and the responsibility of man.*

- He knew that God was in control,
- Yet he also knew that *God works through humans.*
- He made himself available to God.

Mordecai did what he knew to do. He interceded for his people.

- He donned sackcloth and ashes and took residence outside the palace gate.
- When **Esther received word** of Mordecai's position,
- **She was grieved** and sent clothes to him to exchange for his sackcloth.
- **When Mordecai refused to change**, Esther summoned Hatach, the king's chamberlain assigned to her and sent her to Mordecai to find out from him the source of his trouble.

Mordecai informed Hatach of the decree of Haman against the Jews and **he asked Esther** to go to King Ahasuerus and request a reprieve for her people.

Esther was reluctant to approach Ahasuerus.

- **Only those called** before the king were welcome to enter the throne room.
- **To go into** the room **without being called** meant death,
- **Unless the king** extended his golden scepter to the visitor.
- Esther dispatched Hatach to tell Mordecai of her quandary.

Mordecai refused to accept Esther's excuse and challenged her to take the risk.

- He said that **she had no choice** but to go before Ahasuerus.
- He said to her that she nor her family would escape the coming genocide.

He did more than motivate her by fear. He inspired Esther.

Mordecai recognized the providential hand of God in the placement of Esther in the palace of the king.

His words challenged her deeply: Esther 4:14 - ***For if you remain silent at this time, relief and deliverance for the Jews will arise from another place, but you and your father's family will perish. And who knows but that you have come to your royal position for such a time as this?***

Mordecai understood that God was in control and the unlikely choice of Esther as queen now made sense. (Esther was the key to the salvation of the Jews).

God often triumphs over situations by using people.

- He used Moses to lead the people of Israel out of Egyptian captivity.
- He used Gideon to defeat the Midianites who were stealing Israel's crops and their courage.
- He used David to destroy the giant, Goliath, and the giant of fear.

Each of these men arrived on the scene just in time.

- *Moses labored for forty years for his father-in-law until God changed his job description.*
- *Gideon threshed wheat under the cover of darkness until the Lord called him to lead Israel.*
- *David tended to his father's sheep until his time came.*

*Each in his own way turned the tide against the enemies of God's people.
God maneuvered them into their place in the kingdom when He needed them.*

III. THE ROLE OF THE INTERCESSOR

Perhaps Romans 8 best describes the role of an intercessor.

There Paul depicted two ways in which an intercessor works.

Romans 8:26–27 - In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us through wordless groans.²⁷ And he who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for God's people in accordance with the will of God.

- The Spirit makes intercession when we do not know what to pray.
- The Spirit compensates for our inability.

Romans 8:34 - Who then is the one who condemns? No one. Christ Jesus who died—more than that, who was raised to life—is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us.

- Paul said that Christ makes intercession for us.
- Christ provides the power and access to God that we lack.

An intercessor pleads our case using his own abilities on our behalf.

The Book of Hebrews makes the same point: Hebrews 7:25 - Therefore He is also able to save to the uttermost those who come to God through Him, since ***He always lives to make intercession for them.***

Jesus is unchanging and eternal who always makes intercession for us.

Mordecai's challenge caused Esther to evaluate her position in the Palace.

- At first glance, **it looked like she had much to lose.**
- If she appeared uninvited before King Ahasuerus, **she risked death.**
- The memory of **Queen Vashti's humiliation** was fresh in Esther's mind.
- However, the annihilation of her people **was more than she could bear.**
- **The Jews were more than** just her people; **they were God's children.**
- **Somehow God would come through** for them, and for her.

Esther is the heroine, but we must never underestimate the role of Mordecai.

He encouraged Esther, but he did more than encourage her;

He challenged her to become involved.

- His pointed remarks and unflinching courage -
- **Motivated her to appear before the king with her request.**
- **Without Mordecai's support it is doubtful** -
- **Esther would have taken the risk of losing her life.**

Esther, **strengthened by Mordecai's encouragement**, sought and was granted an audience with King Ahasuerus. **She invited him—and Haman—to a banquet she was preparing in the king's honor.** When the king asked Esther if she had a request, she invited him and Haman to another banquet.

- **Haman's head grew larger with each invitation.**
- **He was encouraged by** his wife Zeresh and his friends to order a gallows be constructed for the fly in the ointment of his life—**Mordecai.**

At the second banquet, **the king again asked Esther if she had a request he could grant.** Esther revealed to King Ahasuerus the plot against her and her people.

- **The king was enraged and demanded to know who had hatched this plot.**
- **Esther replied** that **Haman was her adversary and enemy.**
- **The king hung Haman** on the gallows that Haman had constructed to execute Mordecai.

CLOSE: The Book of Esther is rich in irony.

One night King Ahasuerus could not sleep, so he had his servant read to him from the chronicles of his reign.

The reading reminded him of the time when *Mordecai had thwarted an assassination attempt* against his life.

The king asked what had been done to honor Mordecai.

When it was told him *that nothing had been done*, the king commanded Haman to lead Mordecai around the city riding on the royal horse dressed in royal robes.

Haman built a gallows upon which he planned to see Mordecai hang. Instead, *Haman was hanged on his own gallows*.

Perhaps the most ironic aspect of the Book of Esther is that **God is never mentioned in the book, yet He is so much in evidence**. This is His story.

He placed Mordecai and Esther in key places in a Gentile kingdom.

- And when the time was right, they became God's way of saving His people.
- God has not changed.

He still uses ordinary people to accomplish His will for this world.

Every Christian should consider whether they are willing to be a vessel God can use to carry out His plan.